

Announcement of an effort to restore water quality in Laurel Fork in Pocahontas, Virginia

PUBLIC MEETING: Pocahontas Presbyterian Church at 134 Moore Street in Pocahontas, Virginia, on February 13, 2006 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

PURPOSE OF NOTICE: To seek public comment and announce a public meeting on a water quality improvement study by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Conservation and Recreation for Laurel Fork in Pocahontas and Tazewell County.

MEETING DESCRIPTION: Final public meeting on a study to restore water quality

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY: Virginia agencies are working to identify pollutants that impair aquatic organisms and identify sources of bacteria contamination and causes of low levels of dissolved oxygen in the waters of Laurel Fork which flows through Pocahontas in Tazewell County Virginia. The bacteria contamination exceeds water quality standards, which prohibits the recreational use. The stream is impaired for failing to meet the *Aquatic Life Use* based on violations of the general standard for aquatic organisms. The stream is impaired for violations of the dissolved oxygen standard as well. Low dissolved oxygen impairs or decreases the number and variety of aquatic organisms in the water.

Listed in 1998, the 2.9 mile long "impaired" stream segment on Laurel Fork begins at Route 644 and flows downstream through the Town of Pocahontas to Bluestone River. The stream is impaired for failing to meet the *Aquatic Life Use* based on dissolved oxygen violations, violations of the general standard for aquatic organisms and failure to meet the *Recreational Use* because of fecal coliform and e.coli. bacteria violations. Bacteria sampling upstream of the segment in 2004 revealed bacteria contamination above the original segment so that the TMDL study includes Laurel Fork upstream to Bossevain at Route 644 and the confluence with Curran Branch.

The study reports the pollutants impairing the aquatic community and develops total maximum daily loads, or TMDLs, for the impaired waters. A TMDL is the total amount of a pollutant a water body can contain and still meet water quality standards. The study also presents the sources of bacteria contamination and a TMDL for bacteria. To restore water quality, contamination levels have to be reduced to the TMDL amount.

HOW A DECISION IS MADE: The development of a TMDL includes a public comment period, including public meetings. After public comments have been considered and addressed, DEQ will submit the TMDL report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.

HOW TO COMMENT: DEQ accepts written comments by e-mail, fax or postal mail. Written comments should include the name, address and telephone number of the person commenting and be received by DEQ during the comment period, February 13 to March 7, 2006. DEQ also accepts written and oral comments at the public meeting announced in this notice.

TO REVIEW DRAFT TMDL REPORT: The draft TMDL report on the impaired waters is available after January 9, 2006 from the contact below or on the DEQ web site at www.deq.virginia.gov/tmdl.

CONTACT FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

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